

Medicare Part D – Federal Prescription Drug Benefit

Beginning January 1, 2006, Medicare Part D, the new federal prescription drug benefit, will pay for prescription drugs for Medicare/Medi-Cal dual eligible recipients and all other Part D-eligible recipients through private prescription drug plans

By now, many of the dual eligible recipients have received notices from the federal Center for Medicaid and Medicare (CMS) and the California Department of Health Services telling these beneficiaries that as of January 1, 2006, Medi-Cal will no longer be paying for their prescription drugs because they will be receiving prescription drug coverage through Medicare.

Also, these beneficiaries should have received a notice from CMS telling them which Medicare Prescription Drug Plan they have been randomly enrolled into. Under Medi-Cal there was a standard statewide set of prescription drugs that were covered. Under the new Medicare prescription drug benefit, private companies will be providing the coverage. But each plan has their own list of drugs that the plan will pay for so there are differences among the plans. CMS placed the dual beneficiaries into a drug plan automatically to ensure that they have prescription drug coverage beginning January 1, 2006. However, the beneficiary has the right to change plans.

Questions? Please contact the following resources:

1-800-Medicare (1-800-633-4227)

This number is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week. The Medicare agent can also tell a caller which plans include more of prescription drugs that a beneficiary may be taking.*

Medicare also has a web site: www.medicare.gov

Health Insurance Counseling and Advocacy Program (HICAP) at 1-800-434-0222

HICAP provides free, impartial help in dealing with Medicare and long-term care insurance issues. Because of the high volume of calls that HICAP has been receiving, callers will be asked to leave a message for a return call.

California Pharmacists Association (CPhA) at 1-877-727-8341

This is a toll-free hot-line that will be available after January 1, 2006, for pharmacists to get their urgent questions answered. A live expert will be available Monday – Friday, 8:00 a.m. – 6:00 p.m. After hours, pharmacists can record their questions to be answered the next business day.

Another resource for pharmacists is the web site for Department of Health Services-Medi-Cal. The web site address is www.medi-cal.ca.gov

*When contacting these resources, the beneficiary should have their Medicare card, Medi-Cal card, the enrollment letter they received and a list of the prescription drugs that they are taking.

